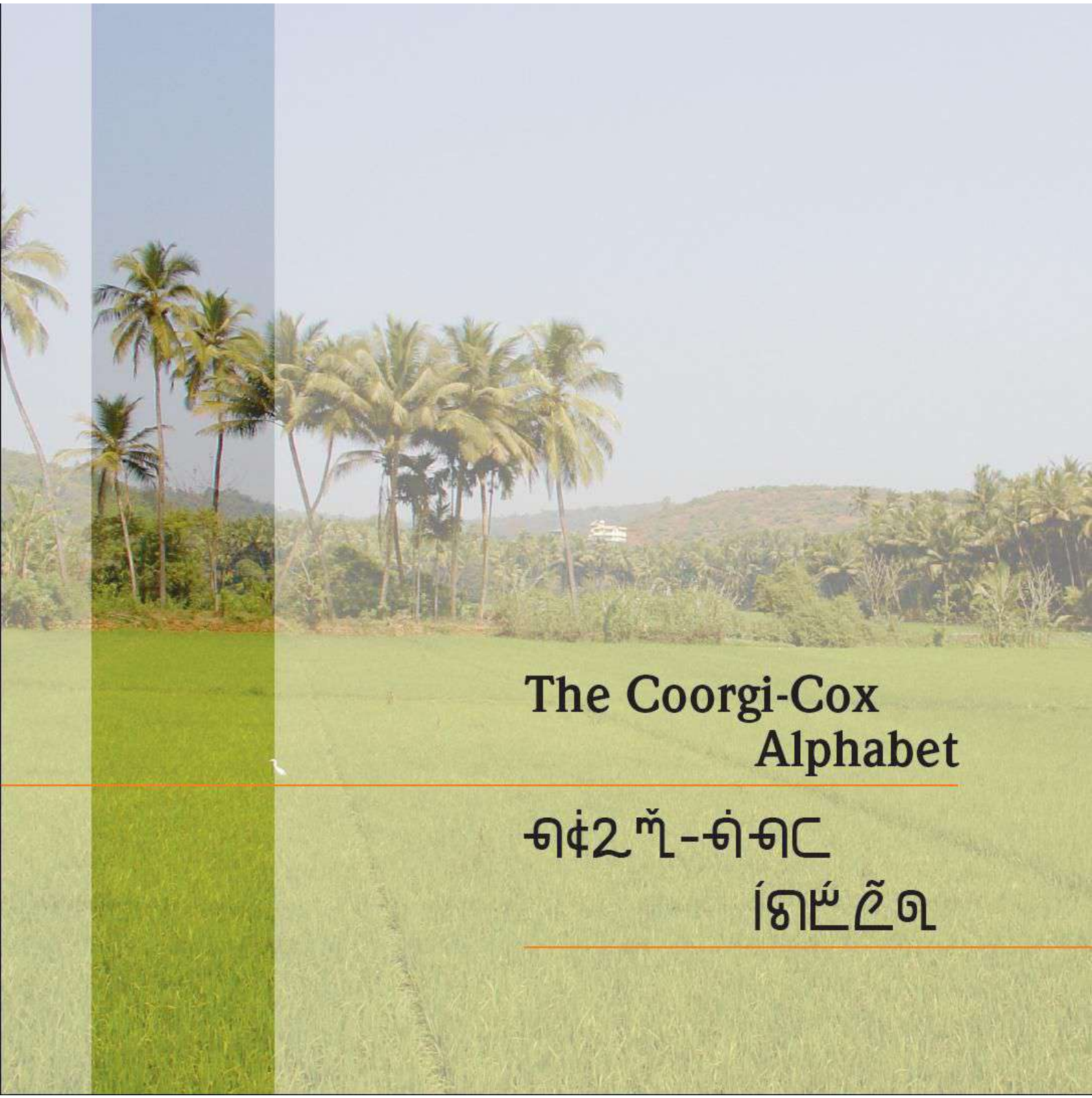


The Coorgi-Cox Alphabet

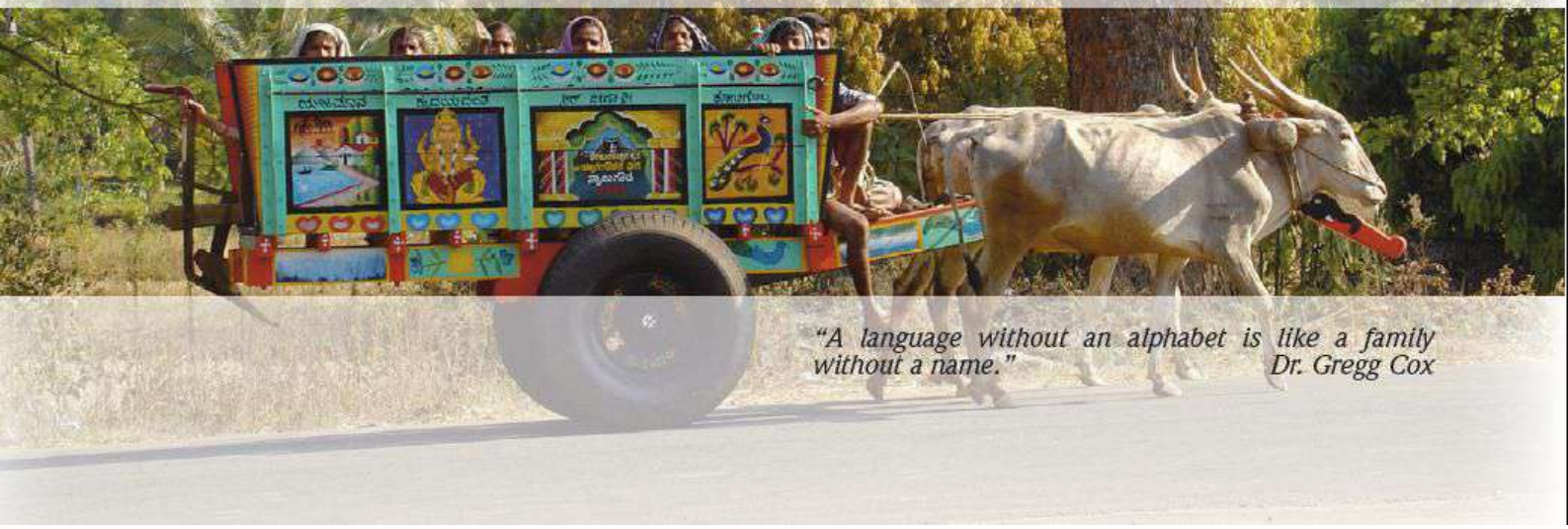
ಕಣ್ಣಡಿ-ಕ್ಕರ ಬರ್ಪಿಲ

A language is as individual as a family name

A language without an alphabet is like a family without a name.

To use the alphabet of another language is like taking the name of your neighbour. Your true identity is forgotten or diluted in its use. With time, the original name may become lost forever, as is the case with many languages. Only those languages which have been able to express themselves in their own written form, have gained official recognition. The situation with the Kodava tak, or Coorgi language as it is also known, is very similar. Without a written alphabet of its own, Kodava tak may face the same fate as many other languages before it.
In order to help preserve the language, I have designed, developed and initiated a purely unique alphabet to be used for the Kodava tak.

The Coorgi-Cox alphabet is not based on any other existing alphabet, but customized to meet the needs and requirements of the spoken Coorgi



"A language without an alphabet is like a family without a name." *Dr. Gregg Cox*

language. Great care was taken in selecting a character form which would be easy to learn, use and write. In addition to these aspects, the alphabet had to match the cultural background of the area in which the Coorgi language is spoken.

In the beginning

The word compilation phase began in February 2003 after a visit to the Coorg area. It would take another seven months of regional study before the first character design was initiated. In September of the same year, another visit to the Coorg area was made and several individual letters were designed and studied. It was at this point that a vowel based form was initially tested, and accepted as a working alternative to a full selection of letter based vowels.

In February of 2004, another visit was made to the Coorg area. During this visit, a base of 26 consonants and 5 vowels were completed. To allow even more ease, vowel markings based on the 5 vowel sounds were incorporated for the consonants. The concept for a fully functioning Kodava tak alphabet was taking shape. With the vowel-consonant marking concept, the new alphabet gained an unique feature of being able to be written in either a long or short form. To ensure that this concept functioned properly, several words, sentences and place names were translated into the new alphabet. Once this proved positive, several other studies were made in order to test the structural function within the Coorgi language. Following this field study, slight changes were made to the phonetic transcription including several changes to letter forms, allowing more ease in hand writing. After the changes, the alphabet was again tested and evaluated. The evaluation proved positive, and the

alphabet entered the computer design phase.

A standard computer based font system was selected to allow global compatibility. A computer expert was hired along with a graphic designer to add life to the new alphabet. The font design phase was ready for print testing by the first week of February 2005, exactly two years after the first visit to the Coorg area.

With the new font prepared and the alphabet ready to be launched to the general public, a small instruction manual and accompanying compact disk were manufactured. The instruction manual explains the alphabet in detail, focusing on each individual letter, sound combinations, words and sentences. The accompanying compact disk contains all of the material listed in the manual and the Coorgi-Cox font. The font itself, can be installed into almost any personal computer by using the same method of installation as any other working font.

Dr. Gregg Cox at work on the Coorgi-Cox alphabet during his stay in Virajpet in February 2004.

How the alphabet functions

The Coorgi-Cox alphabet uses a combination of 26 consonants, five vowel markings and a diphthong marker. Each letter represents a single sound and there are no capital letters. Punctuation follows the same basic rules as found in the English language.

Vowels:
The vowels in the Coorgi-Cox alphabet are formed by using five simple markings:

a e i o u

These markings can also be placed above any of the consonants, producing a unique feature which enables Coorgi words to be written in either a long or short form.

Example:

ga ge gi go gu

Isolated vowels, a vowel by itself or at the beginning of a word, use the same markings set above a post:

A E I O U

Example:

ag eg ig og ug

Double vowels take a similar form to the isolated version with the addition of a half circle:

AA EE II OO UU

Example:

gaa gee gii goo guu

The sequence of the Coorgi-Cox alphabet is as follows:

A		Gh		Sh	
E		H		T	
I		J		Th	
O		K		V	
U		Kh		W	
B		L		Y	
Bh		M		Z	
Ch		N		ae	
D		P		ai	
Dh		R		oi	
F		Rh			
G		S			

The Coorgi-Cox alphabet uses a combination of 26 letters, five vowel markings and a diphthong marker.

The diphthong marker represents certain vowel combinations.

O oi, oy

Õ ae, ay or long "a"

Ŏ ai or long "I"

Example:

ᒪO goi (goy)

ᒪÕ gae (gay)

ᒪŎ gai

The individual letters in action

The vowels: The first letters of the Coorgi-Cox alphabet

´	~	ˇ	·	··
a	e	i	o	u

The vowels each take three distinct forms and have several functions, though regardless of form, each vowel has only one sound.

First form:	Vowel marking
Second form:	Isolated
Third form:	Doubled

The first form is the vowel marking following a consonant.
Example:

kal (leg)
"long form"

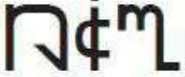
kal (leg)
"short form"

The second form is the vowel in an isolated position or at the beginning of a word.
Example:

angh (five)

(Note: there is not a long or short form with isolated or doubled vowels.)

The third form is doubled vowels.
(A double vowel is two vowels of the same type found together.)
Example:



moog (nose)

naalhe (tomorrow) or

Coorgi

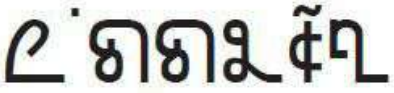
The consonants: The body of the Coorgi-Cox alphabet

As with the vowels in the Coorgi-Cox alphabet, all consonants have only one sound.
Example:

dandh (two)
(Note: the "d" and the "dh" sound.)

Another point to notice is the use of "h" in transliteration of Coorgi words. Don't confuse the single "h" with any of the combination consonants, "bh, ch, dh, gh, kh, rh, sh and th." As you can see from the alphabet, these are separate letters and should be used as such.

Example:



bolltheedh (white)

In some cases, transcribed vowels are also followed by an “h” though it may not be necessary to use it since the vowels can be represented as “a or ah, e or eh, i or ih, o or oh, and u or uh.”
Example:

angh (five)
May also be written as “ahngh” in English based spelling.

Consonants without a following vowel remain unmarked.
Example (short form):

nalla deena (Good day)

In the long form, the separation is obvious.
Example:

nalla deena (Good day)

The diphthong marker: The last letter of the Coorgi-Cox alphabet

There are many words within Coorgi which use the various diphthong combinations.
Example:

bai (mouth)

oimbad (nine)

aeraha (1,000)

By combining the vowels, consonants and diphthong marker, any word in Kodava tak or incorporated foreign words can be transliterated into the Coorgi-Cox alphabet.

One point to remember, foreign words have to be sounded out and then transcribed. A perfect example is the name "Cox." The "C" has to be translated by using the "k" and the "x" should be translated by using a combination of "k" and "s."

"Creating sentences in the Coorgi-Cox alphabet is as easy as creating individual words."

Dr. Gregg Cox

Sentence building
long and short form

Creating sentences in the Coorgi-Cox alphabet is as easy as creating individual words.

English

I wish I could stay here for a few more days.

Coorgi-short

Coorgi-long

Coorgi transcribed

Naan illi chenna kaala jaasthi uliyok naak manassund.

Keyboard Set-up

The letters of the alphabet are displayed as follows:

The letters and symbols below are found by using the “shift key”.

The isolated vowels are found by using “ ´ ” in combination with “a”, “e”, “i”, “o” or “u”.

Giving life to the alphabet

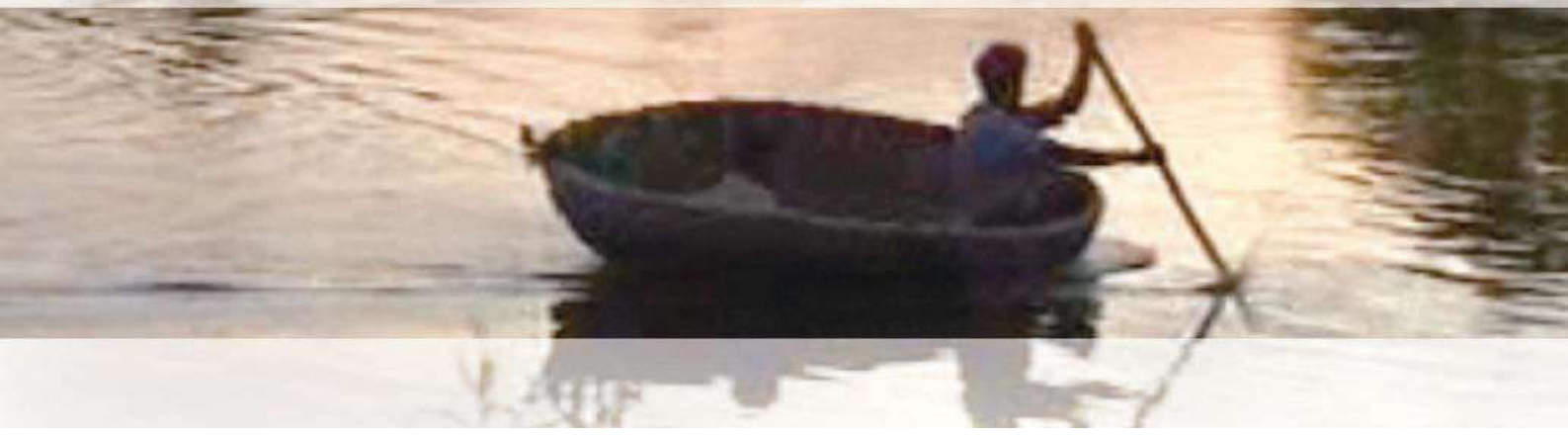
In order to allow the new alphabet to be accepted and used by all Coorgi speakers, several phases of "alphabet introduction" are planned. These phases are broken down into eight distinct stages.
The phases are as follows:

Phase 1
The first phase consists of introducing the alphabet to the Coorgian government officials and other prominent individuals associated with the Coorg area.

Phase 2
The second stage of the plan consists of this guide and an accompanying compact disk. Several thousand copies of both, have been produced and will be given out freely to the general public within the Coorg area.

Phase 3
The third phase consists of a written contest of a Kodava tak text written in the new alphabet. A first prize of one Lakh will be given for the best presentation. The contest rules and regulations are given at the end of this guide.

Phase 4
This phase is to have several Coorgian stories, poems and songs written and published in the new alphabet. The



material to be published will be collected from native Coorgi speakers.

Phase 5
The next phase will be to have a small newspaper and yearly journal printed and distributed solely in Kodava tak using the new alphabet.

Phase 6
The sixth phase of the plan is to have the new alphabet recognized by the Indian government.

Phase 7
The seventh phase is to have the Coorgi-Cox alphabet introduced into the local education system. This means being taught in the local schools and colleges.

Phase 8
The final phase is to have the new alphabet used as a medium throughout the Coorg area. At this stage, correspondence, advertisements, articles and other notices which were previously written in Kodava tak using either the Kannada script or Latin script, should be written in the Coorgi-Cox alphabet.

Stages of this plan may vary considering governmental intervention.

About the author/inventor

Dr. Gregg M. Cox has studied foreign languages and linguistics for over 30 years. He is the author of over 325 books and holds the world record as the "greatest living linguist."